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#### NORTHEAST CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

Four members of our Chapter attended the Northeast Regional Conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, on the weekend of November 13 -14, and found it full of surprises, information, entertainment and inspiration.

One feature was a presentation by Warren Blumenfeld, a university educator, founder of the National Gay Student Center, and author or editor of several books focusing on gay/straight alliances and making schools safe for g/l/b/t students. With the help of slides and a wry sense of humor, he took us from his sad, lonesome, "different" childhood to his coming out and becoming an activist who believes that homophobia damages everyone, as detailed in his recent book, *Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price*.

We were honored by the wholehearted participation of PFLAG National President Paul Beeman, a retired Methodist minister, who joined a Saturday panel with three other clergymen to speak -- and parry questions on -- "Spirituality and the Soul," that delved into attitudes of gays towards their communities of faith, into scriptural references (if any) to gayness, and into ways congregations can become more welcoming to gays.

The workshop on Safe Schools was a revelation. Several PFLAG members told of their successes in placing books in school libraries that introduce students to the idea that heterosexuality is not the only way to be, and what being gay actually means. They worked with school counselors and administrators, and health educators, giving presentations and workshops to try to end verbal and physical abuse of gay or questioning youngsters by teachers and other students.

The two days were punctuated by social events, a sumptuous luncheon, a delightful concert by the New Hampshire Gay Men's Chorus, and nuts-and-bolts sessions on Membership Recruitment, Coming Out, Hate Crimes Prevention, Advocacy, and much more, led by staff members of National PFLAG. There was so much to learn and do, and we felt sustained by the spirit of well over 100 dedicated PFLAGers who joined in the Conference.

Now we're looking forward to the National Conference in Washington, DC, in April of 2000!

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Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc. is a support, education and advocacy organization.

Founded in 1981 by 25 parents, PFLAG now services approximately 70,000 members and speaks for thousands of others. PFLAG affiliates are located in more than 400 communities in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, and five other countries.

PFLAG is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization that is not affiliated with any political or religious institution.

#### Mission Statement

PFLAG of Greater Providence, an affiliate of PFLAG, Inc., is dedicated: to the preservation of families in loving relationships.

to educating an ill-informed public about homosexuality, and

to the attainment of full civil rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people and their families.

PFLAG National

can be reached by writing to:

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(202) 638-4200

E-mail [info@pflag.org](mailto:info@pflag.org)

Web site: <http://www.pflag.org>

Did you know there is another PFLAG chapter in Rhode Island? The RI PFLAG East Bay Chapter meets in Tiverton. To contact them for yourself or your family, call Barbara at (401) 624-6944 or Shirley at (401) 624-8566.

METHODIST CLERGY MAKE BRAVE MOVE to PERFORM SAME-GENDER UNIONS

Challenging their denomination's regulations, twenty retired United Methodist clergy in New England have issued a statement declaring their willingness to officiate at same-gender covenant services.

"We are troubled that . . . homophobia grips our people," the clergy said in a statement released in November.

"We believe that every child of God deserves to be treated with respect and challenged to become fully the person God is creating. While we respect the conscience of those who cannot join us, we prayerfully believe that our own convictions, both as Christians and as United Methodist clergy, allows us no other course of action."

Is This the Homosexual Agenda?

A gay friend sent us this funny item, which he had received from a priest. Many of us have heard Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and others speak of the "Homosexual Agenda," but no one has ever seen a copy of it. At last, here is a copy, obtained directly from Homosexual Headquarters (where official toaster points are chronicled):

- 6:00 a.m. Gym
- 8:00 a.m. Breakfast (oatmeal and egg whites)
- 9:00 a.m. Hair appointment
- 10:00 a.m. Shopping (preferably Neiman-Marcus or Saks Fifth Avenue)
- 12 noon Brunch
- 2:00 p.m. 1) Assume control of U.S. Federal, State, and local governments, as well all other national governments.
  - 2) Destroy all healthy marriages.
  - 3) Replace all school counselors in grades K-12 with militant homosexuals seeking to recruit children for homosexual lifestyles.
  - 4) Bulldoze all houses of worship.
  - 5) Secure total control of the Internet and all mass media.
- and 6) Be utterly fabulous!
- 2:30 p.m. Get forty winks of beauty rest to prevent facial wrinkles from being caused by the stress of world conquest; aromatherapy.
- 4:00 p.m. Cocktails
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner (soup, arugula salad with balsamic vinegar, some Chardonnay)
- 8:00 p.m. Opera
- 10:30 p.m. Cocktails in a charming neighborhood bistro.

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### Three Gay Senior Citizens Gave SAGE Insights at October Meeting

Being homosexual in the early part of this century was very different from what it is today.

It was fraught with fear, isolation, self-doubt, shame and secrecy. Because of that, many gays remained closeted, some not daring to acknowledge even to themselves their feelings and wishes. In today's more liberal climate, some of them -- now senior citizens -- still carry that legacy of being the uneasy outsider.

These were among the insights shared at our October 24 meeting by three members of SAGE/RI (Senior Action in a Gay Environment), a professionally guided educational, social and support group for gay, lesbian, and bisexual elders. Speaking were Marge Moskol, a psychotherapist, and Dan Gooden and Jerry Hubert, South County retirees who have been a couple for 37 years.

Marge explained that the local SAGE chapter is part of a loose federation of similar organizations nationwide. It is an intergenerational network for outreach and service. SAGE trains members to be "friendly visitors" to the homebound and handicapped, sometimes providing them with a vital service like transportation to or from a hospital. SAGE refers seniors to support services such as Meals on Wheels and RI Department for the Elderly. The official RI Senior Guide lists SAGE. Visiting Nurse Associations often refer clients to assess their needs.

SAGE also conducts social events: picnics, brunches, and outings to museums and other sites of interest that often have gay content or are gay-owned. They send speakers to senior centers so that "hidden" gay people will know that SAGE exists.

Marge feels that PFLAG makes young gays today fortunate, because when parents are encouraged to understand and love their gay children, the children can mature with pride and openness. She did not really "coalesce" as a lesbian until she was quite mature and her parents had passed away. She now lives in Pawtucket with her partner of many years.

After living as a young man in a gay community in Washington, DC, Jerry was one of numerous gays of his generation who married in an attempt to live a more mainstream life. The marriage lasted eighteen years. He was closeted while working for the federal government, and is glad to be able to live an openly gay life, but he still resents the fact that when his partner, Dan, had a stroke, the doctor refused to communicate with Jerry in his "next of kin" capacity. He is also saddened that his pension will "die with him," because there is no way that Dan can receive payments as a spouse would.

Dan feels fortunate that he did not experience discrimination when he came out to his family -- and to himself -- when he was college senior. His father had already passed away, so there was no one at home to "give him flack," and the rest of his family was accepting. He first became a teacher, then a psychotherapist, and approached both careers from a spiritual point of view, which he holds to this day and applies as a SAGE volunteer. He and his two co-presenters think that the new concept of gays-only retirement communities is not a good idea. They'd rather not be segregated.

Thanks very much to our speakers, for enlightening us about SAGE's wonderful work, and for their tireless efforts for their organization. We wish the people who think gays are rootless roamers could hear about Jerry's brother, a gay man who has sustained a relationship for 52 years!

#### WASHINGTON, DC, GAYS & LESBIANS MAY ADOPT CHILDREN

With an estimated 3,100 children in DC needing loving adoptive parents, Congress recognized that public health agencies and not politicians should decide what is in the best interest of a child. An amendment that would have banned same-gender couples and unmarried heterosexual couples from adopting failed in the House of Representatives.

Would you like to be part of an important survey?

Our chapter has received a request from a licensed social worker who works with the Massachusetts Network of Alliances for Gay and Lesbian Youth. She has been working for over a year on an interview project that hopes to capture the experiences in interviews with her that can be scheduled at our individual convenience, on any day or evening, at a location near our homes.

The head of this study, Susan Saltzburg, MSW, says that among the goals are to teach human service professionals more about the experiences of families of g/l/b/t's so that they can be more supportive; to provide understanding and empathy for other parents; and to publish a series of articles helpful to parents and professionals. The first of this series has already been published in the Journal of Family Psychotherapy, and received a most positive response.

Complete confidentiality is assured. No names nor identifying information will be used in the project. If you would like to find out more about being interviewed, write Susan at 20 Rockland House Road, Hull, MA 02045, or E-mail her at susansalt@aol.com.

If before you call or write you would like more information about Ms. Saltzburg's fine credentials, or about the people who have already participated, please call Myra, our chapter president, at 751-7571.

#### FRANCE LEGALIZES SAME-SEX UNIONS

France recently became the largest country in Europe, and the first nominally Roman Catholic one, to legalize same-sex unions. The National Assembly passed a law creating "civil solidarity pacts." Unmarried couples, including homosexuals, may register their unions at courthouses beginning next year, and come away with most of the rights of traditional married couples. After three years of stated fidelity, the registered couples can claim rights of married couples, such as simultaneous vacation time, lighter inheritance taxes, and filing joint tax returns. Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and the Netherlands have all granted similar rights.  
Vive la France!

--Also in Washington, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force created a Family Policy Initiative to secure inclusive definitions of "family" in national, state, and local policy contexts.

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